Learning for Life—Planning for Student Success

Minister's Message

Over the past three years, I have talked to hundreds of parents, teachers, students, school board members, and taxpayers. They have shared their ideas and concerns about what's working, what's not, and what needs to be done to help our students achieve better results. Their ideas have shaped *Learning for Life*.

The plan is not flashy. It's straightforward.

Learning for Life begins with a solid foundation in the early years, including support for pre-schoolers and smaller classes when children start school.

The plan puts the focus on the basics first. Good reading, writing, and math skills have, and always will be, essential to learning everything else in life.

For our students with special needs, more professionals and more assistive technology will provide more individual attention for students and help remove barriers to learning.

Quality teaching is another obvious component. Teachers must have the training, the tools, and the time they need to support student achievement.

Everyone agrees that education is a shared responsibility between home and school. If we expect parents to actively support learning both at home and in school, we need to provide them with more and better information on their children's progress—good or bad.

We also need to challenge some misguided concepts, like testing is a bad idea. We can't help students do better unless we clearly measure their progress and openly and honestly share with them the results of their efforts.

The *Learning for Life* plan won't make all of the problems in our education system magically disappear overnight, but over time, it will make a difference. I look forward to working with all members of our school communities in fulfilling our shared commitment to help our students do better.

Honourable Jane Purves
Minister of Education

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Executive Summary

The Minister of Education and staff have heard from hundreds of parents, teachers, school staff, school boards, and students about their priorities for education. The Department of Education has also conducted program evaluations and students have participated in provincial, national, and international assessments.

Themes are consistent. Students need a solid foundation through more support in the early years and in reading, writing and mathematics. Quality teaching is critical to student achievement, and all students must have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Student achievement can be supported by their parents' active involvement. Students should also feel safe in schools that are clean and in good repair. Finally, funding for education needs to grow, with dollars for education targeted to priorities and used to the maximum benefit for students.

Learning for Life presents specific actions to address these issues. Over the next three years, the plan will bring more than 310 teachers and other professionals into classrooms. Thousands more books will be placed in the hands of students.

Education funding will continue to grow, with an investment of more than $35 million to support smaller classes and special education. Over the next two years, more than $15 million will be targeted from within the department's budget to support priorities, such as reading, writing, math and computers for schools. As well, $172 million is projected to build and renovate schools over the next two years.

The Early Years

By 2006, $66 million will have been invested to support early childhood development. The funding will help children get "ready to learn" by the time they enter school.

Once in school, students will receive more individual attention in smaller classes. By 2005, no child in grade primary, 1, or 2 will be in a class with more than 25 students.

Basics First

Programs and funding continue to be targeted to improve student reading and writing. As one example, more than 600,000 books have been purchased for elementary students.

In 2002, grammar will begin receiving added attention. As well, early elementary students must now spend at least 90 minutes a day on language arts, including an hour on reading activities. Struggling students will also get more support by having access to Reading Recovery province wide.

Building on the foundation laid in elementary, an Active Readers program, involving more books for students and support for teachers, is being introduced in grade 7. Resources will continue to be introduced in higher grades over the next three years.

Grade 6 literacy skills will be assessed, and individual student results will be available to parents by 2004. For the first time, the test results will be used to identify struggling students, so the students can receive additional support and meet a literacy standard before graduation.

A new *Math Matters* strategy is also being implemented. This involves more texts, more time on math, and more support for teachers. In high school, new courses have been introduced to meet the learning needs of struggling and advanced students.

School boards are responsible for developing action plans to improve student achievement, and must report annually on results.

The province will continue toward its target of one computer for every five students. Between 2001 and 2004, 3,600 computers, software, and accessories will be delivered to grades 4 to 6 classrooms.

Success for All Students

Over the next three years, at least 135 new resource teachers, reading specialists, speech pathologists and other professionals will be assigned to work with students. Pilot projects will be funded that allow more individual attention for students. More assistive technology that removes barriers to learning will be available to students.

A new racial equity policy will support recognition, respect and affirmation of racial and ethnocultural education priorities. Work on addressing recommendations in the Black Learners Advisory Committee report will also continue.

The delivery of Core French through distance education will be piloted in an effort to reach more students. To reinforce quality standards, a new assessment will be developed to test language skills of French immersion students in Grade 9.

In co-operation with school boards, the department is assessing the challenges faced by isolated schools. A committee will make recommendations regarding ways to protect the quality of education for all students, wherever they attend school.

Quality Teaching

Action is being taken to ensure Nova Scotia trains and retains qualified teachers, particularly in specialty areas, like math, science, French and special education. An early recruitment tour is planned for 2003, as well as the development of a marketing campaign to attract more students to teacher education.

Teachers also deserve ongoing support once they are hired. Extensive professional development is being delivered in literacy and mathematics for teachers, teacher leaders and principals. Teachers are also receiving practical guides, including lesson plans, to support the delivery of the math and language arts curricula.

Professional growth plans will guide teachers in their continuing efforts to stay abreast of new curriculum, technology and teaching methods. A framework will be developed to guide the growth planning process, which will include goal setting and monitoring.

Informed, Involved Parents

A number of initiatives are planned or under way to provide better information and give parents more opportunities for involvement. A standard student report card will include letter grades for elementary and junior high, and number grades for high school to clearly show parents how their children are progressing. An annual Minister's Report to Parents will include results from provincial, national and international tests, as well as actions to improve achievement. A new interactive Web site for parents will include plain-language information on how students are doing in schools.

School advisory councils will be reviewed to consider ways that parents' roles can be enhanced. Pilot projects have been launched to more effectively support school improvement and enhance accountability through accreditation.

Safe Schools, Healthy Students

The department continues to invest in new school construction and major renovations. Between 1999 and 2005, 19 new schools and 156 renovation projects have been, or will be, completed.

A new code of conduct that promotes mutual respect, responsibility and discipline is now in place in Nova Scotia schools. Three pilot projects will be launched with school boards and other partners to test ways to prevent behavior problems, and to deal with students who are severely disruptive, including bullies. New school staff, volunteers and other members of the school community are also required to undergo criminal records, child abuse and reference checks before they work with children.

To promote health, smoking is now prohibited on school grounds, and new anti-smoking resources are in place in schools.

Beyond the curriculum, eight "active school community" pilots will be launched this fall. The pilots will test a comprehensive program to promote daily physical activity, including after-school programs, community events, and co- and extra-curricular activities. A new community use of schools policy is under development that should see more youth and community access to school facilities, including gymnasiums and sports fields.

Financial Accountability for Taxpayers

School boards receive more than $808 million to support education. To fulfil the provincial responsibility for accountability, new financial controls have been, or are being, put in place including: a standard administrative and compensation structure, broader reporting requirements, board audit committees, restrictions on commercial activity, and protection against conflict of interest.

Pilot projects remain in place in two school regions, where elected board members are responsible for education matters and a chief executive officer, who reports to the Deputy Minister of Education, is responsible for buildings, busing, budgets and human resources. The department is working co-operatively with all boards on ways to support effective financial and facilities management.

Learning for Life

Education does not end at graduation. The department has demonstrated its commitment to lifelong learning through the creation of Nova Scotia's first school of adult learning. In consultation with business and industry, the department is also developing a skills agenda, with specific details and actions to be announced in fall 2002. Apprenticeship legislation is also being reviewed.

Access to post-secondary education and training is critical to learning for life. A significant program will soon be announced to lower student debt. Growth in community college training is also a priority.

Learning for Life does not present all of the answers, nor does it present overnight solutions. It does, however, present the direction and priorities for education for the next three years so partners are informed and can participate in supporting success for all learners.

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Introduction

Since 1999, parents, teachers, school board members, students and taxpayers have had more opportunity than ever before to express their views concerning education.

The Education Partners Forum was created in 2000 to give the Nova Scotia School Boards Association, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and provincial parent associations an opportunity to meet regularly with the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education. In 2002, the Minister also established the province's first Student Education Council, to hear ideas and concerns from high school students and recent graduates.

The Minister has also met and heard from hundreds of teachers, parents, and students during school visits and professional development sessions, and through letters and e-mails.

Quality, standards, accountability

The important issues for all groups are consistent. People want more attention to quality, standards, and accountability.

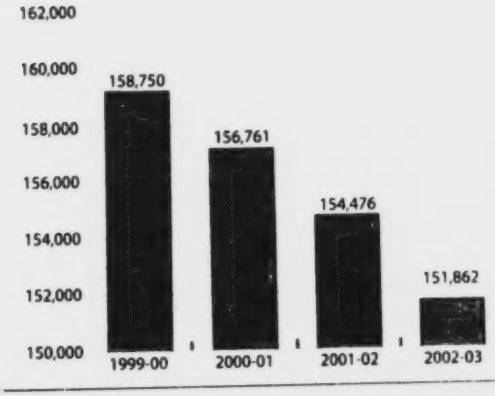
Everyone wants students to get a solid foundation through more support in the early years and added attention to reading, writing and mathematics. They want quality teaching and the opportunity for all students to reach their full potential.

Everyone also agrees that student achievement can be supported by parents' informed, active involvement. Students should also feel safe in schools that are clean and in good repair. Finally, everyone agrees dollars for education should be spent in a way that has maximum benefits for students.

Nova Scotia faces many of the same challenges in education as exist in other parts of the country. Enrolments are dropping (see Figure 1), presenting particular challenges in rural Nova Scotia.

Figure 1: Student Enrolment

Enrolments down 4.5%, 1999 to 2002–03

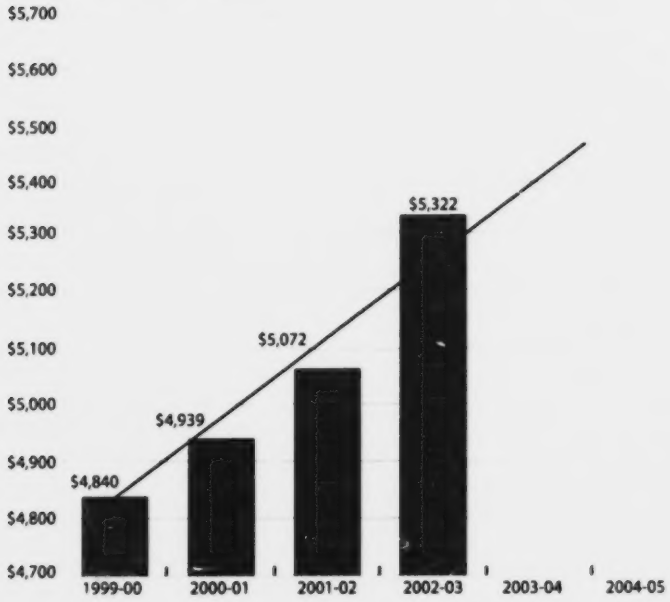


At the same time, funding per student is increasing (see Figure 2).

Partners in education must work together to ensure that education funding has the maximum benefit for students.

Per student funding up by 9.9%, 1999-00 to 2002-03

Figure 2: Funding Per Student



Learning for Life sets the direction and goals. The details that support the goals will continue to be shaped through the input of all partners interested in education.

Beyond the actions identified in *Learning for Life*, significant work continues in other areas of education. For example, the new mandatory Canadian History credit is now offered province wide, new music and visual arts elementary courses are being implemented, and ways to help students move from school to post-secondary training and work are being developed. A full presentation of education activities is contained in the department's business plan.[1]

1. *Nova Scotia Department of Education Business Plan 2002–03*, www.EDnet.ns.ca/business

As well, education does not end at graduation. *Learning for Life* recognizes the importance of education, beginning at birth and continuing with seniors who have lessons of their own to share.

Already, the department has demonstrated its commitment to lifelong learning through the creation of Nova Scotia's first school of adult learning. In consultation with business and industry, the department is also developing a Skills Agenda, with specific details and actions to be announced in fall 2002.

Further, access to post-secondary education and training is critical to learning for life. Beyond this document, significant initiatives will be announced to lower debt levels for post-secondary-education students and expand access to community college training.

The Early Years

Helping children begin their education on the right foot, so they stay a step ahead

Learning begins at birth. The development of the brain sets the base of competence and coping skills for later stages of life.

Parents are their children's first teachers. They can instill a love of learning in their children at a very young age.

Families, communities, and governments can support parents in this goal. The earlier that support is provided, the greater the benefits for the child.

Learning to Love to Read

Books reaching 6,650 babies and their families this year; 10,000 in future

One of the most important gifts a parent can give a child is to instill a love of books. To help parents introduce reading to children at an early age, a new Read to Me program was launched in January 2002.[2]

The program, now under way in three hospitals, gives every new mom and dad infant books, baby's first library card, and information on reading development and community resources. As the program develops, Read to Me will be expanded to all hospitals, and to children under five who come to the IWK emergency room.

Early Childhood Development

$9.1 million for early childhood development in 2001, 2002

Nova Scotia is working with families, communities, and the federal government to provide support through the federal-provincial Early Childhood Development agreement.[3] Between 2001 and 2006, $66 million is being invested to help children get off to the right start in life.

Priorities receiving funding include

- a Healthy Beginning home visiting program where nurses visit new babies and their families
- more portable[4], subsidized child care spaces, including spaces for children with special needs
- grants for child-care centres with qualified staff who participate in ongoing professional development

2. Read to Me is a partnership among the IWK, IWK auxiliary, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), Halifax Youth Foundation, departments of Education, Health, and Community Services, and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

3. The Early Childhood Development agreement is under the Department of Community Services in collaboration with the departments of Health and Education.

4. Portable means funding is assigned to the child, not the centre. This allows parents who move for work or other reasons to maintain child care.

In 2001 and 2002, 329 new full-time and 74 part-time child care spaces created

- more information and access for families to community-based education and support, such as child care resource and referral programs, offered through family resource centres
- programs to enhance the inclusion of children with special needs

As well, a $2.4 million Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund[5] enables not-for-profit groups to access grants supporting family literacy and children's reading, learning and development. Projects can range from helping parents get children ready to attend school to establishing "reading together" clubs.

Early School Years

Attention to early childhood development must continue when a child enters school. In particular, support and success in the early grades are key determinants in a student's success in later grades.

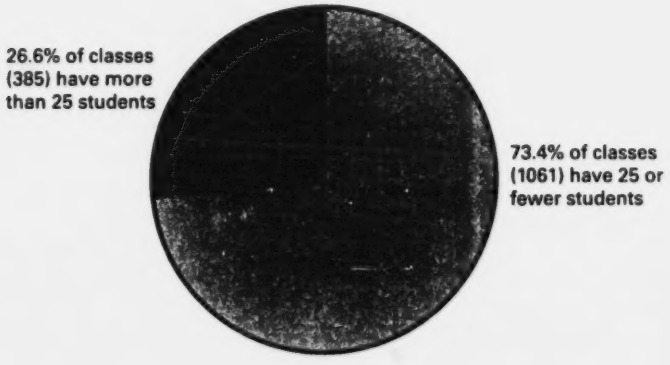
Over the past three years, the Department of Education has launched a number of programs, such as Active Young Readers/ Jeunes lecteurs actifs, to support the early years.

Class size also plays a role in the learning process. The smaller the class, the more individual attention and support teachers can provide to students.

No primary to 2 classes will contain more than 25 students by 2005

In Nova Scotia, class sizes overall have remained relatively constant over the past five years. However, as seen in Figure 3, almost 27 percent of grades primary to 2 classes contain more than 25 students.

Figure 3: Grades Primary, 1, and 2 Classes–2001-02



5. The Family Learning Initiative Endowment Fund is administered by the Halifax Youth Foundation, and is a partnership among the provincial government, HRDC, and the Foundation.

A three-year plan has been developed to change this. This is the first time that provincial class size maximums have been in place in Nova Scotia. There will be no more than 25 students in primary classes as of September 2003, no more than 25 in grades primary and 1 as of September 2004, and no more than 25 in grades primary, 1, and 2 as of September 2005.

$18 million being invested

Table 1: Funding and New Teachers[6]

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	TOTAL
Primary Maximum	$2.75 M	$2.75 M	$2.75 M	**$8.25 M**
Grade 1 Maximum		$3.5 M	$3.5 M	**$7.0 M**
Grade 2 Maximum			$2.7M	**$2.7 M**
TOTAL	**$ 2.75 M**	**$6.25 M**	**$8.95 M**	**$17.95 M**
# of new teachers	75	55	45	**175**

175 new teachers to be hired

The department is now working with school boards to analyse current class size data.

Planning will consider the need for some flexibility at the school level when making decisions regarding combined classes and French immersion. Planning will also consider ways to deal with schools where space is unavailable to accommodate extra classes.

As the plan is implemented, the importance of lowering class size limits further in these grades will be considered.

6. Funding has been calculated based on 2001-02 class size data. Funding will be finalized during planning with school boards.

Basics First

Helping students develop the basic skills they need to succeed and putting books in their hands to get the work done

Nova Scotia students are exposed to a rich and diverse curriculum. The elementary and junior high curriculum lay a solid foundation in a range of subjects.

In high school, students must complete 18 credits to graduate, including 13 mandatory and 5 elective credits. This enables students to learn essential skills and knowledge, while maximizing student interest in learning through choice.

However, the basics must come first. Students must have solid reading, writing, problem-solving and math skills to be successful in school and in life. This fact is echoed by parents, teachers, post-secondary institutions, and employers alike.[7]

In some areas, Nova Scotia students are doing well. In the most recent national writing assessment, most Nova Scotia 16-year-old students performed above the Canadian average.[8]

Other literacy statistics suggest significant work remains in order to sustain and build student achievement:

- In 2000, most Nova Scotia 15-year-olds performed above the international average, but below the Canadian average in reading.[9]
- In Atlantic Canada, approximately 25 percent of adults have minimal literacy skills, meaning they have few of the essential literacy skills needed to understand and use written materials.[10]

In mathematics, students across Canada are achieving at lower than expected levels. In the most recent national assessment, Nova Scotia 16-year-olds performed at, or better than, the Canadian average. However, provincial testing, as well as information from school boards and schools, clearly shows that students should be achieving significantly higher in this important subject.

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7. The Conference Board of Canada lists the ability to communicate, manage information, use numbers, think and solve problems as fundamental to enter, stay in and progress in the world of work.

8. Nova Scotia. Department of Education, *Minister's Report to Parents–Student Assessment Results for Nova Scotia* (Halifax: The Department, 2002).

9. Human Resources Development Canada, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada and Statistics Canada, *Measuring up: The Performance of Canada's Youth in Reading, Mathematics and Science, OECD PISA Study–First Results for Canadians aged 15*, (Statistics Canada, Minister of Industry, 2001).

10. Canada. Organization for Economic Co-operation andDevelopment and Statistics Canada, *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada* (1999).

Higher Achievement in Reading, Writing, Grammar

The department is working with teachers, principals, and school boards on a plan to increase student achievement in reading, writing, and grammar. The plan has the following elements:

- more books, and teacher and classroom resources
- more time for learning
- professional development (see Section 4, Quality Teaching)
- early intervention for struggling students
- testing for progress, support for students having difficulty
- a literacy standard for graduation

More Books, and Teacher and Classroom Resources

Since 1999, an unprecedented number of books and resources to support reading and writing have been placed in classrooms. This translates into more than 600,000 books for elementary students, and more than 10,000 resources for elementary teachers.

During 2002-03, $2.4 million is being invested to support Active Young Readers/Jeunes lecteurs actifs, grammar instruction, and the introduction of Active Readers/Lecteurs actifs in junior high. This includes

- a grammar handbook (*Writers in Action/Aide-mémoire d'écriture*) to belong to every grade 4 student
- more than 20,000 dictionaries and thesauri for grades 4 to 6 classrooms, as well as Bescherelles to assist French first-language students in conjugating verbs
- more than 100,000 books for grade 7 classrooms
- more than 3,000 professional resources for teachers

More Time for Learning

While all teachers recognize the importance of language arts, time spent on reading and writing varies from school to school.

As of September 2002, standard minimum times are in place to ensure students spend adequate time, on a daily basis learning language arts.

90-minute daily minimum to spend on language arts in elementary

Within the minimum standard, the importance of uninterrupted time is reflected in a required Active Reading Hour/Heure de lecture active for grades primary to 3.

In grades 4 to 6, a Learn to Read, Read to Learn/Apprendre à lire, Lire pour apprendre hour gives students structured, uninterrupted time to support their growth as readers. Activities include research, guided and independent reading, and exploration of a variety of texts, ranging from electronic resources to technical writing.

For junior high, the department has released a Time to Learn strategy. Schools are expected to review time now spent on language arts and maximize ways to help students develop literacy skills in other school subjects.[11]

Semestered high schools have been asked to review ways to provide continuity and uninterrupted learning by offering year-long language arts courses.

At all grade levels, teachers should encourage and support student use of school libraries. Use of school and regional libraries can make a significant contribution to student learning, by stimulating an interest in reading and by developing students' research skills.

Early Intervention for Struggling Readers

Reading Recovery is a highly successful program that improves the skills of students who are struggling to learn to read and write.

The program, which provides one-on-one support, is offered in grade 1 so that reading problems can be identified and corrected early. This has immeasurable benefit for students throughout their school years, and is shown to reduce the need for resource assistance in later years.

Reading Recovery succeeds for three out of four students

Nova Scotia is already a leader in Reading Recovery, being the first to adapt the program to the French language.

Currently, however, Reading Recovery is available in only about 55 percent of the province's elementary schools.

Reading Recovery will be available as needed to all grade 1 students across the province by 2005.

11. Nova Scotia. Department of Education, *Time to Learn Strategy–Instructional Time and Semestering* (Halifax: The Department, 2002), 3.

12. The success rate for Nova Scotia is defined as the percentage of students who are brought up to the reading skills of their peers, and remain at the level of their peers 3 years later with no additional supports.

Testing for Progress, Support for Students Having Difficulty

Evaluation is required to chart student achievement and program results. Continuing work with teachers will provide valuable information in this regard, as they are in the best position to evaluate their students' progress on a daily basis.

In addition, provincial testing in language arts will continue in grade 6 and test results will be provided to school boards and schools. For the first time, individual student test results will be provided to parents.

First individualized test in fall 2003 for grade 6, results to parents in early 2004

In the past, provincial test results have been used by the department, school boards and schools to improve programs. For the first time, as a result of individualized scoring, the test results will be used to identify and help struggling students.

A support strategy is being developed so that struggling students receive the help they need. Targeted funding for 2003–05 will be determined as part of this process.

Similar to the approach for Active Young Readers, the support strategy will involve teacher professional development, new classroom resources, and a team approach at the school level. More resource teachers in schools will also be available to support struggling students.

Students will be tested again in grade 9. If they continue to struggle, added support will continue to be available in high school. Students can write the test again in grades 10, 11, and 12.

Literacy Standard for Graduation

Students are expected to meet a literacy standard, assessed through the testing program, before graduation. Consultation will take place on ways to ensure the standard is fairly applied to all students.

Higher Achievement in Math

The department continues to work with teachers, principals and school boards on a plan to increase student achievement in math. The Math Matters/Les mathématiques... ça compte strategy has the following elements:

- new courses
- more books and math resources
- more time
- professional development and teacher resources (see Section 4, Quality Teaching)
- accountability for progress

New Courses

Nova Scotia is the first Atlantic province to introduce a new high school mathematics curriculum, based on standards set by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Nine new courses have been introduced since 1999, ranging from foundation to advanced courses.

Math Plus students feel more confident in math. "I have started to raise my hand in class to answer questions instead of only asking questions."

—student

All new courses have been piloted and evaluated. Students are enthusiastic about courses like Math Plus that double the amount of time available for them to learn math skills.

More Books and Math Resources

New programs are being supported with new books and resources. Between 1999 and 2003, $3.3 million has been, or is being, invested in textbooks, mental math resources, graphing calculators, fraction blocks, and other hands-on learning tools. Targeted funding for 2003–05 will be determined as part of the budget process.

Math textbook purchased for every junior high, high school student

The department is working with teachers in identifying appropriate new texts to support the elementary math program.

More Time for Learning

A standard minimum time has been set to ensure students spend adequate time, on a daily basis, in mathematics.

In early elementary, students should now spend at least 45 minutes a day on mathematics, and in later elementary, at least an hour. For grades 1 to 9, daily time will include at least five minutes on "mental math," where students learn estimation and problem-solving skills that will help them in everyday situations.

As in language arts, the Time to Learn strategy asks schools to review and maximize time now spent on mathematics in junior high. Semestered high schools have been asked to maximize ways to provide continuity and uninterrupted learning, such as offering year-long math courses, particularly in grade 10.

Accountability for Progress

About $725,000 is being invested in 2002–03 to hire math leaders and to support math programming at the school board level. School boards are expected to develop and report on action plans and targets to increase student achievement in math.

The mathematics testing program will be expanded to include an assessment in grade 12, beginning in 2004. This will complement math assessments in grades 6 and 9.[13]

Computers in Schools

Access to information technology is now a basic requirement in every school. However, the technology will benefit learning only if students have reasonable access, if teachers receive appropriate professional development, and if schools have technical support.

Over three years, $16.2 million is being targeted at grades 4 to 6. This three-year plan got under way in 2001, and extends to 2004.

Student Access

$7.2 million to bring 3,600 computers to grades 4 to 6 students[14]

The department has set a target of one computer for every five students. This compares to a ratio of one computer to 24 students in 1996, and one computer to about every nine students in 2001–02.

The plan includes

- new computers, printers, video equipment, software, and other accessories to schools across the province
- installation of computers, software, and accessories for students, teachers, and libraries and other specialist rooms in new and renovated schools
- delivery of about 3,000 used, but usable, computers to schools annually through the Technology Recycling program

13. Math assessments now administered in grades 5 and 8 are being shifted to grades 6 and 9.

14. The investment in grades 4 to 6 builds on the delivery of 6,200 computers, software, and accessories to junior high and high schools completed in 2001, through the Information Economy Initiative.

Professional Development

Over three years, $3 million is being invested in professional development for teachers and the development of on-line resources. This should help teachers integrate technology into the curriculum, using technology to support learning.

Technical Support

Over three years, $6 million is being invested in providing technical support, wiring, cabling, and desks. This support is essential if information technology is to be relied upon to support curriculum development.

Success for All Students

Students with Special Needs

Recognizing all students have different backgrounds, interests, and learning needs, and helping them reach their full potential

In June 2001, a committee of stakeholders submitted a report, with 34 recommendations, on ways to improve programs and services for students with special needs.[15] An action plan has been developed to address the recommendations over the next several years.

The plan addresses the following areas:

- at least 135 resource teachers, speech language pathologists, and other professionals
- help for struggling readers
- pilot projects that increase individual attention and support
- assistive technology
- qualifications and training for teacher assistants
- other recommendations in the special education report

$17.4 million targeted for professionals, assistive technology, and individualized support for students with special needs

Resource Teachers, Speech Language Pathologists, and other Professionals

Almost 20 percent of students require some level of special programming or services at some point during their school years.[16]

The range of special education programs and services has increased over the past five years. However, the special education report emphasized a need for significantly more professionals, such as resource teachers and speech language pathologists.

$6 million to add 60 resource teachers and other professionals

Government will invest $6 million between 2003–05, adding approximately 60 resource teachers and other professionals to work with students with special needs. By early 2003, school boards will develop a plan on their resource needs, and submit the plans to the department to receive funding. This will ensure that dollars are spent in this targeted area.

A new master of education program for resource teachers began at Saint Francis Xavier University in 2001, and is getting under way at Mount Saint Vincent University this year. This, and other recruitment efforts, should assist in the availability of resource teachers.

15. *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee* (Halifax, 2001).

16. Department of Education 2002 Statistics.

Help for Struggling Readers

$4.3 million to make Reading Recovery available to every grade 1 classroom by 2005, adding 35 teachers

As detailed on page 11 of this report, Reading Recovery provides one-on-one support to struggling students for a short-term basis outside the regular classroom. The program helps students improve their reading skills in the early years, reducing the need for resource help later.

Pilot Projects: More Individual Attention and Support

The *Education Act* supports inclusion of all students in school programs and activities.

The goal of inclusion is to support the active membership, participation, and learning of all students.

At the same time, the *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee* recognized the need for a range of programming options and services. The implementation of inclusive education looks different for each student depending on the outcomes developed to meet their needs and the settings in which those outcomes can be met.

$6 million to support eight pilot projects each year, totalling 24 by 2005; bringing at least 40 more professionals to work with students

Options may include short-term or partial withdrawal of students from classrooms, co-teaching, or temporary placements in specialized programs. This will offer more options to children who have needs that can be more effectively met without the distractions of a regular classroom.

In all cases, the best option for the student will be contained in his or her individual program plan, developed by parents, teachers, and school administrators.

During 2002–03, the department will work with school boards on the criteria for the pilots. Parents of students with special needs and teachers will also be consulted.

All board proposals must have an evaluation process for the pilots. The evaluation of the outcomes will be shared among all boards and other education partners.

Assistive Technology

Every child has different learning needs and abilities. Imagine the child with an active mind, eager to learn, but without the skills to communicate, or even hold a pencil. Fortunately, technology exists today that can dramatically improve the achievement of students with such learning needs.

$1.1 million to purchase assistive technology

Assistive technology can range from talking books, to electronic pencil holders, to sophisticated computer-aided speech devices. However, access to that equipment in public schools has been limited.

During the 2002–03 school year, the department will work with schools to develop technology priorities, guidelines for purchase and use, professional development and technical support needs, and a means of sharing the technology to make it available to the greatest number of students.

The first assistive technology purchases will occur for the 2003–04 school year. Professional development regarding the use of more sophisticated technology will also occur during 2003–04 to be ready for the purchase of more expensive equipment in 2004–05.

Table 2: Targeted Funding

	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	TOTAL
Pilots	$1.0 M	$2.0 M	$3.0 M	**$6.0 M**
Professionals	$0.8 M	$2.0 M	$3.2 M	**$6.0 M**
Reading Recovery	$0.67 M	$1.67 M	$2.0M	**$4.3 M**
Assistive Technology	$0.05 M	$0.35 M	$0.65 M	**$1.1 M**
TOTAL	**$2.5 M**	**$6.0 M**	**$8.9 M**	**$17.4 M**

Qualifications and Training of Teacher Assistants

The number of teacher assistants in Nova Scotia has grown dramatically by 111 percent, or more than doubled, between 1993 and 2000.[17]

Given the role that teacher assistants play in supporting students, it is critical that they have appropriate qualifications and training.

More teacher assistants per capita in Nova Scotia than in any of the four Atlantic provinces

In April 2002, all school boards were surveyed on their recruitment and training of teacher assistants. Generally, boards reported that the teacher assistants they hire have the basic qualifications, using the department's *Teacher Assistant Guidelines* as a minimum standard.[18] Boards noted, however, that teacher assistants may need additional training after being hired to assist them in specific assignments.

17. *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee* (Halifax, 2001).

18. Nova Scotia. Department of Education and Culture, *Teacher Assistant Guidelines* (Halifax, the Department, 1998).

Two priority areas for training are the application of assistive technology and behaviour management. The department is now reviewing existing materials regarding assistive technology, and will develop a training package that can be available to all school boards. The package will support the introduction of new assistive technology in schools.

The department will also work with school boards to identify certified trainers and training opportunities for teacher assistants in non-violent methods to intervene in crisis situations.

Other Recommendations in the Special Education Report

The special education report also included recommendations regarding communications, professional development, parental involvement, inter-agency collaboration, program standards, and accountability. A draft action plan has been prepared addressing each of these areas. It is being shared with stakeholders in fall 2002, and released following their input.

African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, and Multicultural Education

One of government's stated commitments is to ensure the education system reflects the diverse nature of Nova Scotia communities.

In the spring 2002 sitting of the House of Assembly, the Minister of Education tabled a new racial equity policy. The racial equity policy is a framework for developing strategies related to equitable learning environments, curriculum, instruction, assessment, counselling, and community relations.

This fall, as part of the introduction to the policy, the department is sponsoring the Human Rights in Education Conference. Through this, as well as ongoing activities of African Canadian Services, Mi'kmaq Services, and Student Services, the department will continue to support the recognition, respect, and affirmation of racial and ethnocultural educational priorities of Nova Scotia.

The government remains committed to working with the African Nova Scotian community on addressing the *Report of the Black Learners Advisory Committee*.[19] Along with the racial equity policy, actions by this government include designated seats for African Nova Scotians on school boards, continuing curriculum review and development, and funding for race relations, crosscultural understanding officers for school boards.

19. Black Learners Advisory Committee, *BLAC Report on Education: Redressing Inequity—Empowering Black Learners*. (Nova Scotia, 1994).

French-Second-Language Education

Nova Scotia recognizes the personal and cultural value of learning a second language. The ability to communicate effectively in more than one language has never been more important.

Core French

Most French-second-language students are enrolled in Core French. In elementary, Core French consists generally of 30-minute classes offered largely by teachers who travel between two or more schools.

The Department of Education is undertaking pilot projects to explore alternative ways to deliver elementary Core French and to study the effects of these new models on student motivation and development of French-language skills.

Pilot projects to enhance delivery, expand access to Core French

Declining enrolments in certain parts of the province limit the ability of some high schools to offer Core French. To increase the opportunity for all students to learn French as a second language, the department is exploring the delivery of Core French through distance education. The development of listening and speaking skills is one of the challenges of delivering Core French through distance education. A pilot project, which will consider ways to deal with this challenge, is expected to begin in early 2003.

French Immersion

French immersion programs continue to grow in Nova Scotia. Enrolments and the availability of programs have increased in all areas of the province.

Learning a second language helps develop first-language skills

In elementary, particular emphasis continues to be on the development of literacy skills through the Jeunes lecteurs actifs/ Active Young Readers initiatives. Literacy initiatives are expanding in junior high, with the addition of classroom learning resources and a revised curriculum document for French language arts.

At senior high, more course options are now available to French immersion students. Histoire du Canada is now being offered and students may choose to take all their high school mathematics courses in French.

New French language proficiency test for French immersion students

As well, a new assessment is proposed to test the language skills of French-immersion students at grade 9.

A report with recommendations regarding the delivery of French immersion in the Halifax Regional School Board will be shared with all school boards.[20] The department will also work with the Halifax board on implementing the report recommendations, with ways to enhance stability in French-immersion programming being the first priority.

Isolated Rural Schools

One of government's stated priorities is to protect isolated rural schools from detrimental and untimely reductions in their teaching staffs.

In co-operation with school boards, department staff are working to identify the challenges faced by isolated schools. They will also make recommendations regarding ways to protect the quality of education to all students, wherever they attend school.

The review also includes analysis of how current funding formulas affect areas with significantly declining enrolments Recommendations are expected in 2003.

20. *French Immersion Review Committee Report*. (Halifax, 2002).

Quality Teaching

Supporting quality teaching through appropriate training, professional development, and resources

Teacher training in Nova Scotia is based on high standards so that teachers are well prepared to offer high-quality instruction in their classrooms. The priorities to support continued quality instruction are

- training and retaining enough teachers, particularly in specialty areas, such as math, science, French, and special education
- providing appropriate professional development and teaching resources
- providing ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Training and Retaining Enough Teachers

In December 2001, a report on teacher supply and demand was released by a committee of Department of Education, school board, Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and university representatives.[21] The report states that while there are currently enough teachers overall, significant shortfalls are expected over the next decade in key subject areas and in the supply of substitute teachers.

Of 115 teachers trained at one university, 70 of the 93 now teaching are working outside Nova Scotia

Currently, the province is training more than enough teachers to meet demand. However, too many are either leaving the province for work or not enough of them are studying in the appropriate specialty areas.

The supply and demand report found that teachers tend to stay in Nova Scotia if they are given full-time work. However, other provinces and the United States recruit earlier in the year. Therefore, the first step in keeping more teachers in Nova Scotia is to enable school boards to hire earlier.

During 2002–03, the department will work with school boards and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union on ways to enable school boards to hire earlier. The group will consider the number of positions that will be required in specialty subject areas. This work will consider retirements, specialties of teachers now teaching, and the current hiring process. The goal is to identify specific job opportunities and actions that will enable boards to hire earlier.

21. Nova Scotia. Department of Education, *Report of the ECF Sub-Committee on Teacher Demand and Supply* (Halifax 2001).

The department will also support an early recruitment tour. Subject to the participation of school boards, the first early recruitment tour is planned for early 2003. A team of representatives from each school board and teacher certification will visit universities offering teacher education to market existing job opportunities.

During the first day, students will review information, ask questions, and sign up for interviews. Interviews for graduating students in specialty areas will be held within the two-day visit.

Increasing the Number of Teachers in Specialty Areas

Currently, there is a huge imbalance in the supply of teachers by subject areas. For instance, 10 teacher-education students majored in math in 2000, and 90 majored in social studies.

The department plans to address this in two ways. First, the province will immediately begin working with school boards and universities on identifying job opportunities for a certain number of teachers in specialty subjects.

Early recruitment tour, marketing campaign

Université Ste.-Anne and Collège de l'Acadie are merging to enhance quality and access to French first-language programming. This merger will see teacher education being offered for French teachers in Halifax. As well, Université Ste.-Anne has begun to offer a Master of Education in Teaching French as a Second Language. The program is currently being offered in two areas of the province. The possibility of expanding it elsewhere is being explored.

Due to the merger and the new master's program, the number of teacher education students in French is expected to grow.

Finally, the department will co-ordinate and support a marketing plan to promote teaching as a career choice, particularly in specialty subjects. The marketing plan will be developed in consultation with school boards, beginning in fall 2002.

Appropriate Professional Development and Teacher Resources

Once teachers are hired, they require ongoing professional development and support to stay abreast of new curriculum and teaching methods.

Currently, some professional development is mandated by the department, some is initiated by the school board, and some is initiated by the teacher. As the department's professional development plan is directly tied to curriculum priorities, extensive training involving thousands of teachers and principals is being offered throughout the school year and during the summer in language arts and mathematics.

Math leaders in every school

Mathematics is a high priority in 2002–03. The importance of having a math leader in every school was identified as a priority by school boards, principals, and teachers. In spring 2002, 880 teachers were trained to become teacher leaders in their schools.

During 2002–03, 440 principals will attend math strategy workshops to support their roles as education leaders in their schools. Additional training in both math and language arts is being held within schools and boards.

Teachers have said they need more support to plan lessons. To address this, practical teacher resources are being circulated this year for grades primary to 9 in English schools that include sample lesson plans, homework, and other learning activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Individual teachers pursue opportunities for professional growth to differing degrees and in differing subject areas. To assist all teachers, a framework will be developed that sets standards and the process for professional-growth planning. Teachers will develop growth plans in consultation with school principals that will reflect priorities in the school improvement plan linked to student achievement.

The growth-planning process will include goal setting and monitoring. The principal is responsible for monitoring and evaluating growth plans throughout this process to support continued quality instruction.

Informed, Involved Parents

Sharing more information and giving parents a real say in what happens in their schools

Involving parents in their children's education, and creating a strong link between the home and the school, have immeasurable benefits for student achievement. To effectively develop this relationship, parents must be kept well informed and have meaningful opportunities to support school improvement and their children's learning.

Better Information

Parents should receive information from their school, school board and the province on student progress, board action plans and provincial curriculum and standards. Actions to improve communications with parents include

- a standard report card
- an annual Minister's report to parents
- an interactive Web site and parent brochures

Standard Report Card

The report card is one of the most important communications tools between teachers and parents. It must be meaningful, concise, and give parents a clear understanding of how their children are progressing.

New report cards to have letter grades in elementary, junior high; number grades in high school

Parents have said that letter and number grades, with narrative and anecdotal comments, are most meaningful. A new report card, with letter grades (A–E) at elementary, letter grades tied to numeric ranges at junior high, and numeric grades (percentages) at high school, will be piloted in every school board during the 2002–03 school year. A standard report card is also being developed to inform parents on progress and achievement of students with individual program plans.

A final standard report card, to be sent home to parents four times a year, will be available for the following school year.

The report card is part of a broader reporting policy framework that will outline other meaningful ways parents can learn about their children's progress. At the beginning of each school year, teachers and schools will be required to inform parents about other communications opportunities. For example, parent–teacher meetings, homework hotlines, and student portfolios can help parents stay informed.

Annual Minister's Report to Parents

Parents deserve to know about their children's progress in learning the provincial curriculum, as well as how Nova Scotia is doing compared to other provinces and countries.

In 2002, Education Minister Jane Purves released the first *Minister's Report to Parents*.[22] The report details test results from all recent provincial, national, and international testing. It also contains an action plan to improve results. The report will be released annually.

The provincial testing program will focus on language arts and mathematics at grades 6, 9, and 12. Individual student results will be available for the first time to parents, beginning with grade 6 language arts results in 2004.

Interactive Web Site and Parent Brochures

Parents should have information about what their children are expected to learn in school. An interactive Web site will be developed during the 2002–03 school year, so parents will be able to access plain-language information about what students are expected to achieve at different grade levels. Department policies, standards, and programs will also be linked to the site. Parents will be able to post questions or comments, which will be monitored and answered on a regular basis.

Parents of grade 4 students to receive brochure on how to help their children use new grammar handbook

Parents can also benefit from tips on things they can do at home to support their children's learning. During this school year, a series of *Let's Talk about* curriculum brochures will be distributed to parents. Brochures have also been developed for parents of students in French immersion.

A series of brochures and ideas for "homework baggies" with activity cards are being developed so parents can help children with math. The first priority is early elementary.

22. Nova Scotia. Department of Education, *Minister's Report to Parents–Student Assessment Results for Nova Scotia* (Halifax: The Department, 2002).

Opportunities for Involvement

School Advisory Councils

School advisory councils, usually chaired by parents, give parents an opportunity to support their children's education and their schools. Because advisory-council membership includes parents, school staff, community members, and age-appropriate students, the council brings a team approach to school improvement and student achievement.

Review to enhance parents' role on school advisory councils

In many areas, school advisory councils are working well and parents feel they are valued members of their councils. In other cases, parents are concerned that they do not have real input. The department plans to review school advisory councils to consider ways that parents' roles may be enhanced.

In fall 2002, the Minister of Education will have regional meetings with parent representatives from school advisory councils across the province. The meetings will give the Minister an opportunity to hear some of the concerns and ideas parents have about education generally.

As well, councils will be asked to provide comments in 2003 on ways to enhance parent involvement in schools. A consultation document will be distributed in 2002 to all school advisory councils as a basis for providing input.

School Improvement and Accreditation

All schools are expected to develop a school improvement plan, with plan development led by the school advisory council. However, many school advisory councils are unsure about how to approach school improvement planning, and they are unclear about what standards they should measure their school plan against.

The department has launched a model for school improvement planning that leads to school accreditation. Beginning this fall, the model is being piloted in eight schools across the province.

Improvement plans built on evidence: test scores, school and student statistics, parent surveys

The improvement-planning process begins with an internal assessment of school needs. The assessment must be directly linked to student achievement, the public school program, principles of learning, and attributes of supportive learning communities.

The assessment will form the basis of a three-year school improvement plan. Before the plan is finalized, it will be reviewed by an external team of educators, parents and administrators from another school board. The review will ensure the plan is linked to educational priorities, and is supported by evidence. Once approved by the team and school board, implementation will begin. An annual report on progress will be released publicly to ensure accountability for results.

During the third year of the plan, the external team will again visit the school. If the school has achieved significant progress in meeting its goals, the school will be accredited.

Safe Schools, Healthy Students

Helping all students feel safe and secure—in buildings that are safe and clean

Students deserve to feel safe, and be safe, when they go to school. That means having clean schools that are in good repair. It also means feeling safe in a school that provides a respectful, caring environment, with a code of conduct that sets clear standards for expected behaviour and consequences for misbehaviour.

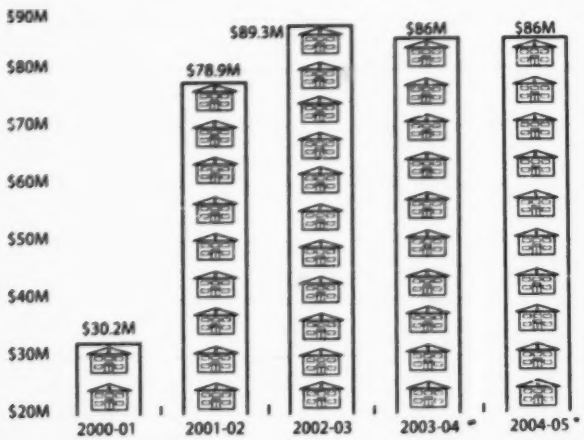
Healthy bodies also help develop active minds. Schools can play a role in promoting physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

New and Renovated Schools

Between 2000 and 2003, almost $200 million was invested in building new and renovating existing schools. This has involved the construction of 12 new schools, and renovations of more than 150. These amounts include dedicated funds for urgent capital projects.

$86 million annually to build seven more new schools by 2005, six more major renovations by 2004

Figure 4: New Schools, Renovations, and Repairs[23]



* 2003–05 amounts are projected.

Throughout the planning and construction process, the department works closely with experts in occupational health and safety. This helps ensure that schools meet the highest standards in terms of air quality and other safety matters.

23. The significant difference in funding between 2000–01 and 2001–02 is due to the discontinuation of public private partnerships (P3) in building schools and the appropriate accounting treatment for capital expenditures.

During 2002–03, government will consider recommendations from the School Capital Construction Committee on future construction projects. Recommendations are based on requests from school boards. The School Capital Construction Committee prioritizes the requests according to the condition of schools to be replaced, adequacy of space for students and for the delivery of core programs, and opportunities for savings.

As well, approximately $95 million is provided to school boards annually for property services and facilities management. Although allotted for this purpose, boards are not required to spend the funding in these areas. The department is now reviewing with school boards the amounts they spend in these areas, as well as their standards and schedules for maintenance and repairs.

Code of Conduct

One of government's stated objectives is "to establish for students and teachers a standard code of conduct which will promote mutual respect, responsibility and discipline". In 2001, a provincial code of conduct was introduced based on these principles.[24]

The code promotes prevention first. Through peer mediation, class and school discussions, and other means, students learn appropriate behaviour within the context of social responsibility, mutual respect, and understanding. At the same time, the code defines standards of behaviour, identifies disruptive and severely disruptive behaviour, and requires consequences for non-compliance.

During 2002–03, code of conduct guidelines will be released, which will include consistent guidelines for tracking student suspensions. Data, including reasons for suspensions, age of students, and type and frequency of the misbehaviour, will be analysed. This will support decisions on actions that could prevent or reduce the incidence of certain behaviour problems.

Pilot projects on ways to prevent behaviour problems, and deal with bullies

During 2002–03, pilot projects in three school boards, and with community partners, will test new ways to prevent behaviour problems and deal with students who are severely disruptive, including bullies. One pilot will consider ways to more effectively involve parents and community members in helping students understand and comply with appropriate standards of behaviour.

24. Nova Scotia. Department of Education, *School Code of Conduct* (Halifax: The Department, 2001).

The other pilots will look at ways to provide academic, psychological, and other necessary support to students with behavioural problems, including short-term placements out of the classroom. When the student returns to school, he or she will have a behaviour management plan and continued access to resource, psychological, and other support.

These pilots will be evaluated throughout the process. Progress and results will be shared to benefit schools in all regions.

Students to advise Minister on bullying

The new Provincial Student Education Council, established by the Minister of Education in 2002, will also provide its perspectives on the issue of bullying. The council will provide ideas on ways to help students feel they can talk about bullying, as well as ways the school system can respond.

Guidance counsellors play a key role in creating safe, caring schools. Work on the code of conduct, including the pilots, will be integrated with the implementation of a comprehensive guidance and counselling program in elementary and junior high.

Criminal Record and Child Abuse Checks, Protection against Harassment

Prior to 2002, all school boards conducted some checks on adults working with students. However, all did not do the same checks on all adults. Beginning September 2002, all new staff, volunteers and other adults who work with children will be required to undergo criminal records, child abuse, and reference checks. This will also include teacher-education students before they begin practice teaching.

During the 2002–03 school year, the department is building on this work by consulting with school boards on a standard policy framework that protects students, employees, and all members of the school community from harassment, discrimination, and child abuse. The framework will include training to ensure all school community members understand their rights and responsibilities to report, including their legal responsibility to report, any suspected child abuse.

Accountability measures, including monitoring and annual reporting, will also be contained within the policy framework. This work will complement the code of conduct and other efforts to promote safe, caring schools.

Healthy, Active Students

Healthy, active students should have healthy, active minds. Given the amount of time young people are in school, schools have a role to play in promoting healthy, active living.

As part of the curriculum, the department is working with school boards on a minimum daily standard for physical education in elementary. As well, Physically Active Lifestyles is now a mandatory course at the high school level.

Efforts must extend beyond the curriculum. Parents' and teachers' guides are now being circulated to schools to provide ideas to increase moderate and vigorous physical activity for children and youth.

Eight "active school community" pilots

As well, eight schools will serve as pilot "active school communities" during the 2002–03 school year. The pilots will test a comprehensive program that includes after-school programs, student leadership, co- and extra-curricular activities, and increased opportunities everyday for physical activity. The active school community will include students, parents, teachers, sport and recreation groups, universities and colleges, business and community organizations, and public health.

To help discourage tobacco use, a new *Smoke Free for Life* curriculum is being implemented in elementary. In fall 2002, public health nurses will begin distributing *Smoke Free for Life* resources to support smoking prevention in primary to 9. Health education in grades 4 to 6 will also focus on the dangers of smoking.

Smoking is now prohibited on school grounds. As well, plans are under way to develop peer-led smoking cessation programs in high schools.

Community Use of Schools

As taxpayers invest significantly in their construction and maintenance, schools should be used for the maximum benefit of students and the community. Increased access also presents more opportunities for physical activity.

Currently, access to schools varies greatly across the province. Some are available free of charge to some groups, some are available at a cost, and some have limited access.

More access to schools

Based on work with school boards, the department is finalizing a policy framework that could see schools available to youth groups free of charge, except for direct additional costs such as clean-up and supervision. Community, not-for-profit groups could also have access at a fee intended to recover board costs such as heat, electricity, and supervision.

School boards are now assessing the draft policy, and will be responding on implications of the policy for their respective boards before the policy will be finalized. The application of the policy to P3 schools must also be assessed.

Accountability to Taxpayers

Ensuring tax dollars are spent to the maximum benefit of students

In 2002–03, school boards received more than $808 million to support education. The province has a responsibility to ensure appropriate accountabilities and financial controls are in place to protect this funding for educational use. In April 2002, amendments to the *Education Act* were introduced to establish these controls.

Financial Controls

Under the amendments, new financial controls include

- standard administrative and compensation structure
- broader reporting requirements
- board audit committees
- restrictions on board involvement in commercial activity
- protection against conflict of interest

Standard Administrative and Compensation Structure

A standard administrative and compensation structure, and standard employment contracts for senior staff, will bring consistency and control to dollars spent on senior administration for all boards. A working committee has been struck involving the department and school board representatives.

The first task is to establish compensation levels and a model contract for regional board superintendents; chief executive officers and directors of education in South Shore, Tri-County and Strait districts; and chief financial officers. This work will be completed in fall 2002. During the remainder of 2002 through to early 2003, the committee will establish a standard administrative structure. Compensation levels will then be established.

Broader Reporting Requirements

School boards, which are now required to report salaries and expenses, will now be required to report all benefits. The reports will also be subject to external review.

Regulations have been drafted and the department has consulted with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nova Scotia and the provincial Department of Finance. Work will be finalized during the current fiscal year.

Board Audit Committees

Board members have a wide range of backgrounds, interests, and experience. Most, however, choose to run for school board elections out of their commitment to children, and do not necessarily have financial management expertise.

The purpose of board audit committees is to ensure that financial expertise is represented at the board table, to complement the expertise available within board administration. The department is now consulting school boards and other government departments on the composition and role of audit committees. Results of those consultations will be put into regulations during the current fiscal year.

Restrictions on Board Involvement in Commercial Activity

School boards can no longer engage in commercial activities without the approval of government. School boards have been asked to provide a complete report on any current commercial activities. Boards will receive information on the continuation or suspension of commercial activities during the school year.

Protection against Conflict of Interest

A working committee, involving department and school board representatives, is being established to review current conflict of interest policies that apply to staff and develop a standard policy as a minimum guide for all boards. The committee's work will be targeted for completion during this school year.

Role of School Boards

In spring 2000, government launched a pilot project in school board governance in Southwest Nova Scotia. The pilot project transferred responsibility for busing, buildings, budgets and human resources to a Chief Executive Officer who reports to the Deputy Minister of Education. Responsibility for education remains with elected board members. In January 2002, an independent evaluation team reported that this pilot should continue with modifications.

As part of efforts to tighten financial controls and accountability at the Strait Regional School Board, the Southwest pilot was extended to the Strait in April 2002.

With regard to the future role of school boards, government supports the value of elected school board members, particularly in the area of educational matters. At the same time, issues of declining enrolments and the need for appropriate accountability require consideration of alternative models to manage facilities effectively and ensure financial controls are in place.

The pilot projects are continuing, with joint committees in place to address the recommendations from the pilot evaluation. Within the current structure, the department will also evaluate its success in working co-operatively with school boards on issues of shared concern, such as financial and facilities management. A decision on the pilots will be reached prior to school board elections in fall 2004.

Summary/Conclusion

This year, Nova Scotia school boards received more than $808 million to deliver education. This plan represents targeted investments of more than $35 million over three years for Reading Recovery, special education, and smaller classes. Another $86 million is being projected annually for new school construction and major renovations, totalling $172 million by 2004–05. As well, the plan targets more than $15 million from within the 2002–03 and 2003–04 departmental budgets toward student learning priorities, such as reading, writing, math, computers and pilot projects.

Learning for Life is based on input from parents, teachers, school staff, students, school boards, and others with an interest in education. As well, this plan reflects education commitments in *Strong Leadership ... a clear course*.[25] Learning for Life, along with initiatives in the department's business plan, takes action on all but one of the public school commitments in *Strong Leadership*. (The one outstanding commitment relates to the establishment of a long-term funding base for schools. In some instances, the action varies from the commitment as a result of consultation with stakeholders.)

25. Nova Scotia. Progressive Conservative. *Strong Leadership ... a clear course*. (Halifax, [1999]).

The following table summarizes funding and time lines for the main elements within *Learning for Life*. Some elements of the plan require more consultation before funding and time lines are finalized. The results of these discussions will form budget and education planning in this and future years.

Activities	Funding Plan	Time Frame	Link to Strong Leadership ... a clear course
The Early Years			
Early Childhood Development Strategy	$66M through the Early Childhood Development Agreement $9.1M committed, 2001, 2002	2001–06	
Smaller Classes	$18M	2002–05 Planning: 2002 Funding: 2003–05	p. 24: Establish a visible, consistent and functional education system based on the most appropriate standards
Basics First			
Student Achievement: Reading, Writing, Grammar	$2M *Active Young Readers*, 2001 $2.4M, 2002–03 Funding for 2003–05 to be determined	2000–2002 Active Young Readers, P–6 2002–03 - More class time on literacy - Grammar, grade 4 - Active Readers, grade 7 2003–05 - Reading Recovery province wide - Grammar focus in more grades - Grade 6 test, results to parents 2004 - Student support strategy, junior high - Literacy standard	p. 24, Visible, consistent and functional education system, standards p. 25, Ensure allocation of resources is done fairly so students have equitable access to comparable equipment, supplies and learning aids

Activities	Funding Plan	Time Frame	Link to Strong Leadership ... a clear course
Basics First (continued)			
Student Achievement: Mathematics	$3.3M on books and resources, 1999–2003 $725,000 to support math instruction, 2002–03 Funding for 2003–05 to be determined	1999–2002 - New high school math courses - High school math texts 2002 - More books, resources - More time on math - Evaluations of new courses - Teacher guides: lesson plans, learning activities - Professional development 2003–05 - Elementary and junior high math - New math test, Grade 12 - Board action plans and annual reports	p. 24, visible, consistent and functional education system, standards p. 25, allocation of resources
Computers	$16.2M ($5.4M per year)	2001–2004	p. 25, allocation of resources
Success for All Students			
Reading Recovery™	$4.3M	2002–2005 Planning: 2002 Funding: 2003–05	p. 25, Develop a multiyear plan for addressing the need for additional resources for students with special needs
Pilot Projects	$6M	2002–2005 Planning: 2002 Funding: 2003–05	p. 25, Ensure adequate access to youth support services, such as social workers, public and mental health professionals; additional resources for students with special needs
Resource teachers, other professionals	$6M	2002–2005 Planning: 2002 Funding: 2003–05	p. 25, adequate access to youth support services; additional resources for students with special needs

Activities	Funding Plan	Time Frame	Link to Strong Leadership ... a clear course
Success for All Students (continued)			
Assistive Technology	$1.1M 2002–2005	Planning: 2002 Funding: 2003–05	p. 25, additional resources for students with special needs; allocation of resources
Language proficiency test–French immersion	2002–03: $50,000 2003–04: $120,000 2004–05: $180,000	Funding discussions with Canadian Heritage Test development, 2002–03 Test piloted, 2003–04 Provincial test, 2004–05	p. 24, visible, consistent and functional education system, standards
Distance education pilot: Core French	Funded by Canadian Heritage	Pilot–2003	p. 24, visible, consistent and functional education system, standards
Isolated Rural Schools	To be determined based on committee recommendations	Committee recommendations 2003	p. 25, Review funding formulas to protect schools and areas of declining enrolments from detrimental and untimely reductions in the teaching staff
Quality Teaching			
Retention of qualified teachers, particularly in specialty areas	$200,000, 2002–03	Beginning 2002–03	p. 24, visible, consistent and functional education system, standards
Professional growth plans	Within budget	Framework developed 2002–03 Growth plan pilots 2003–04	p. 25, Ensure all teachers are given the professional development opportunities they need to effectively implement curriculum changes and new teaching methodology and technology
Informed, Involved Parents			
Standard student report card	Within budget	Pilots 2002–03 Province wide 2003–04	p. 6, Introduce reliable and fair evaluation and reporting systems to provide parents with accurate, regular information about children's progress

Activities	Funding Plan	Time Frame	Link to Strong Leadership ... a clear course
Informed, Involved Parents (continued)			
Minister's Report to Parents	Within budget	First report, winter 2002 Annual report onward	p. 6, reliable and fair evaluation and reporting,
Interactive parent Web site, brochures	Within budget	First brochures delivered 2002 Web site developed 2002–03 Web site running 2003	p. 6, reliable and fair evaluation and reporting, parents
Review of school advisory councils	$50,000, 2002–03	Consultation document distributed Consultation winter, spring 2003 Recommendations for change, fall 2003	p. 24, visible, consistent and functional education system, standards
School accreditation pilots	$40,000, 2002–03 $50,000, 2003–04	Pilots begin, 2002 School improvement plans 2003 Evaluation, 2005	p. 24, visible, consistent and functional education system, standards
Safe Schools, Healthy Students			
New and renovated schools	$198.4M, 2000–2002 (school year) $86M annually to complete projects to 2005	2000–2005	p. 26, Undertake a comprehensive review and cost benefit analysis of the P3 process to ensure that only the best possible approach is used in school construction, renovation and operation P. 26, Establish a special capital improvement fund

Activities	Funding Plan	Time Frame	Link to Strong Leadership ... a clear course
Safe Schools, Healthy Students (continued)			
Code of Conduct	$100,000 to support pilots, 2002–03	Code of conduct introduced, 2001 Code of conduct guidelines, 2002 Pilots, 2002–03 Provincial student education council to give recommendations to minister on bullying	p. 25, Establish and enforce a standard code of conduct, ensure schools are safe places to learn
Active school communities	$80,000, 2002–03	Pilots launched fall 2002	p. 9, Increase funding for health and wellness promotion and disease prevention education
Community use of schools	Budget impact being assessed	Consultation with boards, 2002 Policy framework 2003	p. 26, best possible approach is used in school construction, renovation and operation
Accountability to Taxpayers			
Financial controls	Within budget	Amendments to Education Act, spring 2002 Details complete 2003	
Role of school boards	Within budget	Decision required before next school board elections, fall 2004	p. 25, Amend existing school board boundaries so that they properly reflect community input

This document is located on the Department of Education's Web site at http://www.EDnet.ns.ca Questions or comments can be posted at that site, or write to Education Renewal, Department of Education, PO Box 578, Halifax, NS, B3J 2S9, Telephone: (902) 424-4905.

Feedback is encouraged to help shape the details around actions intended to support learning for life in Nova Scotia.

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